Edward Bradford Titchener (1867-1927)

- **Theoretical Orientation**
  - Although he tried to pass himself off as a loyal follower of Wundt, his conceptualization of psychology drastically differed from Wundt's
  - Theoretical Orientation
    - Dualist, associationist
    - Emphasized images and became a phenomenologist later in life
    - Positivist
    - Subject matter of psychology
      - Psychology is the science of the mind
        - Mind = sum total of mental processes occurring during the lifetime of the individual

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- Consciousness = Sum total of mental processes occurring at any given time
- Mind has the power to organize elements voluntarily
- But rejected Wundt’s idea of distinguishing between mediate and immediate experiences
- Titchener argues that there is only one experience that can be viewed on two different levels
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- Stimulus error
  - Committed when the introspector pays attention to physical properties of the stimulus rather than the psychological sensations
- Psychology is a natural science
  - Goal is description
- Conceptions about conscious experience
  - Consciousness is always changing
  - But can be studied in more situations than allowed by Wundt

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- Introspection
  - Method by which study can be done
  - Special training and appropriate conditions can make introspection just as precise as observations of physical events
- Ontology
  - The legitimate subject matter of psychology is mental events
  - Can only be discovered through introspection
- Strategy
  - Analyze concrete mental experience into its simplest components
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- Discover how these components combine and the laws that govern combination
- Connect them with physical/bodily conditions

Shaped American Psychology

- Taught at Cornell in his Oxford master’s gown because “It confers the right to be dogmatic.”

Edward Bradford Titchener

- Books:
  - An Outline of Psychology (1896)
  - Primer of Psychology (1898)
  - Experimental Psychology: A Manual of Laboratory Practices (4 volumes between 1901-1905)
- While he denied women admission into his experimental group, he did admit the first female graduate students, many of whom went on to become influential in American psychology

Edward Bradford Titchener

- Structuralism
  - Aim of structural psychology was to analyze the structure of the mind, to find the elementary processes of consciousness and to isolate the constituents in the given conscious formation
  - Science begins with observation
    - For Titchener, observation = introspection
      - Not informal
      - Not speculation
      - Rigorous and precise kind of observation needing training to perform
    - Subjects called reagents
      - They are like mechanical recording instruments

Chapter 5: Structuralism
Edward Bradford Titchener

- Subject matter of psychology is conscious experience
  - Dependent upon the person experiencing it
  - Content of consciousness
    - Sensations
      - Most prevalent
      - Basic components of patterns of sights, sounds, tastes, smells, and feels
      - Listed > 44,000 sensations
    - Images
    - Elements of ideas
      - Occur in mental processes that represent events that are not present

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- Affections
  - Elements of emotions that combine to create experiences such as happiness and sadness
- Sensations and images have 4 common attributes
  - Quality
    - Distinguishes every element from every other element
  - Intensity
    - Strength, weakness, loudness, or brightness
  - Duration
    - Course over time
  - Clarity
    - How well attended to the element is

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- Affections have the first 3
- Feelings only vary along one dimension:
  - Pleasant to unpleasant

- Felt that he had refined and improved introspection so that the results from his laboratory were superior to those found in other labs
- He recognized individual differences in mental processes
- Principles of Synthesis
  - Once components isolated, this is the next step
  - But, he was mostly concerned with analysis, not synthesis
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- **Context theory of meaning**
  - Elementary mental events are devoid of meaning
  - Yet perceptions of the world have meaning
  - Meaning results from the constellation of mental events
  - Context generates meaning
  - Combines atomistic and holistic views
  - So, where does Titchener fall on this scale?

Edward Bradford Titchener

- **Psychophysiology**
  - Defining the relationship between body & mind
  - Psychological parallelism
  - Causality is a myth
  - The goal of psychology is description

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- **Criticisms of Structuralism**
  - Use of introspection to get at conscious experience necessarily alters the experience being studied
  - Titchener had difficulty defining what he meant by the introspective method
  - Questions about precisely what the introspectors were trained to observed
  - Titchener’s introspection is actually retrospection
  - Idea of unconsciousness threw a monkey wrench
  - Structuralism is artificial and sterile
  - Structuralist definition of psychology came under attack
Edward Bradford Titchener

- Contributions of Structuralism
  - Contributed to the rapid growth of psychology in North America
  - Trained many important students who assumed leading roles in American Psychology
  - Established an elite organization of researchers
  - Wrote publications through Cornell that disseminated important research findings and theoretical speculations to psychologists
  - Offered a clear-cut conception of psychology
  - Influenced the scope of psychology
    - Reduced scope from Wundt
    - Ignored applied areas
  - Introspection, broadly defined, is still used as a basic methodology of psychology today
  - Forwarded the cause of women
  - Target of criticism

References